

S. Res. 57

In the Senate of the United States,

May 23, 1997.

Whereas the Expedition commanded by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, which came to be called “The Corps of Discovery”, was one of the most remarkable and productive scientific and military exploring expeditions in all American history;

Whereas President Thomas Jefferson gave Lewis and Clark the mission to “. . . explore the Missouri River & such principal stream of it, as, by its course and communication with the waters of the Pacific ocean, whether the Columbia, Oregon, Colorado or any other river may offer the most direct & practicable water communication across this continent for the purposes of commerce. . .”;

Whereas the Expedition, in response to President Jefferson’s directive, greatly advanced our geographical knowledge of the continent and prepared the way for the extension of the American fur trade with Indian tribes throughout the area;

Whereas President Jefferson directed the explorers to take note of and carefully record the natural resources of the newly acquired territory known as Louisiana, as well as diligently report on the native inhabitants of the land;

Whereas Lewis and Clark and their companions began their historic journey to explore the uncharted wilderness west of the Mississippi River at Wood River, Illinois on May 14, 1804, and followed the Missouri River westward from its mouth on the Mississippi to its headwaters in the Rocky Mountains;

Whereas the Expedition spent its first winter at Fort Mandan, North Dakota, crossed the Rocky Mountains by horseback in August 1805, reached the Pacific Ocean at the mouth of the Columbia River in mid-November of that year, and wintered at Fort Clatsop, near the present city of Astoria, Oregon;

Whereas the Expedition returned to St. Louis, Missouri, on September 23, 1806, after a 28-month journey covering 8,000 miles during which it traversed 11 future States: Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Idaho, Washington, and Oregon;

Whereas the explorers faithfully followed the President's directives and dutifully recorded their observations in their detailed journals;

Whereas these journals describe many plant and animal species, some completely unknown to the world of science or never before encountered in North America, and added greatly to scientific knowledge about the flora and fauna of the United States;

Whereas accounts from the journals of Lewis and Clark and the detailed maps that were prepared by the Expedition enhanced knowledge of the western continent and routes for commerce;

Whereas the journals of Lewis and Clark documented diverse American Indian languages, customs, religious beliefs, and ceremonies; as Lewis and Clark are important figures in American history, so too are Black Buffalo, Cameahwait, Sacagawea, Sheheke, Watkueis, Twisted Hair, Tetoharsky, Yellept, and Comowool;

Whereas the Expedition significantly enhanced amicable relations between the United States and the autonomous Indian nations, and the friendship and respect fostered between the Indian tribes and the Expedition represents the best of diplomacy and relationships between divergent nations and cultures;

Whereas the Native American Indian tribes of the Northern Plains and the Pacific Northwest played an essential role in the survival and the success of the Expedition;

Whereas the Lewis and Clark Expedition has been called the most perfect Expedition of its kind in the history of the world and paved the way for the United States to become a great world power;

Whereas the President and the Congress have previously recognized the importance of the Expedition by establishing a 5-year commission in 1964 to study its history and the route it followed, and again in 1978 by designating the route as the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail administered by the Secretary of the Interior through the National Park Service; and

Whereas the National Park Service, along with other Federal, State, and local agencies and many other interested groups are preparing commemorative activities to celebrate the bicentennial of the Expedition beginning in 2003: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) expresses its support for the work of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, the National Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Council and all the Federal, State, and local entities as well as other interested groups that are preparing bicentennial activities to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Lewis and Clark Expedition during the years 2004 through 2006;

(2) expresses its support for the events to be held in observance of the Expedition at St. Louis, Missouri in 2004 and Bismarck, North Dakota in 2005, and many other cities during the bicentennial observance; and

(3) calls upon the President, the Secretary of the Interior, the Director of the National Park Service, American Indian tribes, other public officials, and the citizens of the United States to support, promote, and participate in the many bicentennial activities being planned to commemorate the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

Attest:

Secretary.